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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SANAA 002476

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AMGT](#) [EAID](#) [PARM](#) [MCAP](#) [SA](#) [YM](#) [IZ](#) [ICC](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#) [DEMOCRATIC](#) [REFORM](#) [ECON](#) [COM](#)

SUBJECT: NEA A/S BURNS' 10/4/03 MEETING WITH FM QIRBI: CT

COOPERATION; ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE; HOA; ARTICLE 98; DIP

POUCH/FLIGHTS

REF: A. SANAA 2440

[1](#)B. SANAA 2410

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull for reasons 1.5 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a 10/4/03 call on FM Qirbi, NEA A/S Burns reviewed U.S.-Yemeni CT cooperation and focused on U.S. development assistance. Burns stressed the need for Yemen to pursue domestic reforms as the U.S. works to increase assistance, e.g. via MEPI and, if Yemen qualifies, the MCA. Qirbi agreed on the need for reforms, particularly judiciary. They reviewed Yemeni cooperation with the Gulf states and interaction with the Horn of Africa. A/S Burns stressed the need for an Article 98 agreement. Qirbi said ROYG ratification of the Rome Statute was not imminent, and undertook to work the Article 98 issue within the Cabinet. Burns also underscored the need for Yemeni cooperation to ensure success of Embassy Sanaa's 10/5 diplomatic support flight, and Qirbi was supportive. On Iraq, Burns thanked Qirbi for Yemen's support of AL recognition of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), and they agreed on the need for security and steps to place maximum authority in Iraqi hands. Qirbi said the Palestine situation is still "worrisome" and expressed concerns that U.S. presidential elections next year would weaken efforts to implement the roadmap. Septels report A/S Burns' meetings with President Saleh, other Yemeni officials and NGOs. End summary.

YEMEN COMMITTED TO COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION

[1](#)2. (C) NEA A/S Burns, accompanied by Ambassador, DCM and Pol/Econ Chief (notetaker) called on FM Abubaker al-Qirbi on 10/4/03 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Qirbi also hosted a lunch iho A/S Burns later in the day.

[1](#)3. (C) A/S Burns and Ambassador praised the ROYG's recent success in apprehending a terrorist cell (ref a), but stressed the need for Yemen to stay ahead of al-Qaida to prevent it from reorganizing. Ambassador noted that the both the A/S and GEN Abizaid met Central Security Force (CSF) Chief of Staff COL Yahya Saleh and had paid informative visits to the CSF range. Qirbi said that Yemen has demonstrated a commitment to transparency and is no longer trying to hide terrorist operations. He admitted there is room for more progress on CT and mentioned the need for training and logistical support, saying the ROYG is working to track and arrest terrorists to eliminate Yemen as a breeding ground for terrorism.

[1](#)4. (C) On developing the Coast Guard, both A/S Burns and AMB Hull emphasized the need not just for equipment, but for training and developing the infrastructure to support cost-efficient Coast Guard, Navy and commercial operations.

IMPROVED COOPERATION WITH SAUDI ARABIA; YEMEN SEEKS SUPPORT FOR INCREASED ROLE IN GCC

[1](#)5. (C) FM Qirbi said that Yemen and Saudi Arabia are starting to see more "eye-to-eye" on the issue, resulting in increasing cooperation and transparency after "shying away" from issues of terrorism for the past several years. He expressed hope that Yemen will be able to expand CT cooperation to other Gulf states. Referring to the Secretary's annual meeting with GCC Foreign Ministers during

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the UNGA, Qirbi asked that Yemen be included in such regional contacts when the subject is counter-terrorism.

[1](#)6. (C) Qirbi said that Qatar and Oman, and UAE to a lesser degree, support a greater role for Yemen within the GCC. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are less certain. Qirbi said his goal for the next Gulf states summit in 12/03 is to push for more economic development and freer markets, as well as expanded acceptance of Yemeni workers in the Gulf states. Yemeni labor is not a threat to security, he said.

DEVELOPING HOA RELATIONSHIPS TO PROMOTE REGIONAL STABILITY

[1](#)7. (C) A/S Burns suggested that Yemen could assist the USG in developing regional policy toward the Horn of Africa countries to track with security cooperation already underway with that region. Qirbi welcomed the idea, noting that Yemen

is affected by events in the Horn, and reviewed current issues in the area. Refugees, mainly from Somalia and Eritrea, affect economic conditions, political stability, and social and health factors in Yemen. Qirbi expressed concern, in particular, that the continuing lack of a government Somalia could turn it into the next Afghanistan as a terrorist haven.

18. (C) The FM identified Yemen's objectives in the region as security -- especially enhanced CT cooperation -- and economic/political cooperation. He observed that close relations among Yemen, Sudan and Ethiopia did not define an "exclusive club," noting that Ethiopia was wooing Kenya and he would invite Djibouti to closer coordination during a pending visit.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: FOCUS ON JUDICIAL REFORM AND REDUCING CORRUPTION

19. (C) Qirbi characterized development in Yemen's more remote areas as "minuscule," and said Yemen is looking to MCA to help it fund projects. He acknowledged that the ROYG must tackle some issues in order to qualify, specifying judicial reform, corruption and economic reform as areas "acceptable" to the government and president Saleh for focus. A/S Burns agreed on the need for reform. He stressed that progress would enable the USG to do more on economic assistance.

110. (C) A/S Burns pointed out that Yemen has been the biggest beneficiary of MEPI in the region and said the program could expand in future. He acknowledged Yemen's progress on democracy and the electoral process, but said there is still a need to close holes in the process. FM Qirbi agreed. Burns added that MEPI can be used as a bridge to MCA, and that Yemen should set its sights on qualifying in 2005 -- an ambitious but achievable goal.

111. (C) Qirbi agreed that qualifying for MCA is critical and cited the need to encourage more private investment in Yemen. He said previous attempts to stimulate investment had been "futile," and that Yemen needs the expertise of the U.S. and Europe to improve.

#### ARTICLE 98

112. (C) A/S Burns emphasized the need for Yemen to reach an Article 98 agreement soon. He told Qirbi that 70 countries have already entered into such agreements, including Egypt, Kuwait and Morocco, and that those agreements offered several possible models for a U.S.-Yemeni agreement. He reminded Qirbi that ratification of the Rome Statute before completing an Article 98 agreement would result in cessation of U.S. assistance. Qirbi said that the Statute had been returned by the Parliament to the government, so ratification would be delayed. Recalling his meeting with PM Senior Adviser Bodine during his recent U.S. visit, the FM said he had discussed two possible options and Bodine had promised to send him a third option for consideration as well. A/S Burns welcomed Qirbi's active engagement on the Article 98 issue and urged conclusion of an agreement by year's end. Qirbi promised to consult internally with an eye to concluding an agreement enshrined in an exchange of letters.

#### DIPLOMATIC POUCH/SUPPORT FLIGHTS

113. (C) Turning to Embassy Sanaa's scheduled diplomatic support flight the following day (10/5), Ambassador stressed the need to avoid a repetition of the failed 8/31 flight, which cost the USG \$70,000.00. A/S Burns underscored the point, noting that expanding U.S. assistance programs required reliable pouch and support flight services for the Embassy. FM Qirbi agreed, noting that arrangements had been coordinated with the Embassy and the MFA would have a representative at the airport to smooth any difficulties. (Note: The diplomatic support flight was off-loaded without impediment or delay. End note.)

#### IRAQ: SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY

114. (C) Qirbi referred to the pending UNSCR on Iraq, agreeing with A/S Burns that security was the immediate priority in Iraq. He observed that Yemen and the USG have the same objectives, including transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people and the writing of a new Iraqi constitution, and urged the U.S. to be "flexible" in working toward those aims. Burns expressed thanks for Qirbi's support of Arab League acceptance of the IGC at its September ministerial in Cairo.

#### ISRAEL-PALESTINE: PRESSURE TO MAKE BOTH SIDES MEET OBLIGATIONS

115. (C) Qirbi said that the situation in Palestine is still "worrisome," and that he is concerned that the focus will shift away from the Israel-Palestine conflict in the run-up to the 2004 U.S. presidential elections. He praised President Bush as the first U.S. president to acknowledge

Palestinian's right to a state, and emphasized the need to implement the roadmap. He said that the U.S. and Yemen need to work together to make Palestine and Israel come around, noting that Palestine can be "easily pressured" but Israel will listen only to the U.S. Burns responded that the new PA government will need to make tough choices to stop the violence and Israel must adhere to its commitments.

16. (U) This cable was cleared by NEA A/S Burns.  
HULL